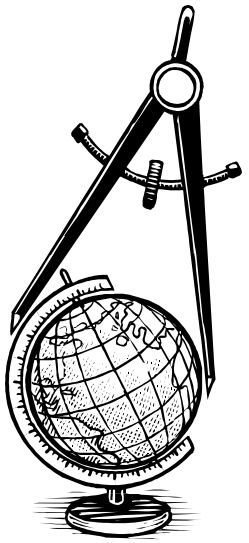


SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the school-based learning component is to provide students with opportunities for career exploration, instruction in both academic and technical skills, and guidance in identifying employment and education goals.

The school-based component consists of six major elements: (1) Career Counseling; (2) Selection of a Career Major/Pathway; (3) Program of Study; (4) Integration of Academic and Vocational Education; (5) Evaluation; and (6) Secondary / Postsecondary Articulation. In this section of the manual, each of the required school-based learning components found in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act will be explained, different types of school-based learning will be discussed, and critical planning elements that you need to address when designing your school-based learning component will be detailed.

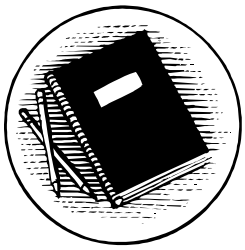
SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING COMPONENTS

As defined, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act's school-based learning component consists of six mandatory elements (See Chart). Its main objective is to ensure that students are participating in learning activities at the school-site that are relevant to the workplace and that helps them gain information regarding career oriented decisions.

CAREER COUNSELING

School-based learning requires that students have an opportunity to participate in a career awareness or career exploration and counseling program no later than the seventh grade.

Research has shown that students who are exposed to a variety of different occupational choices at that level are more likely to focus on an initial career goal. While many would argue that this is tracking, most would agree that, for many of these students, the only way to keep them in school and motivated to learn is to give them a specific focus, even if it that focus will change slightly, or even extensively, at a later date. For many students, their education becomes so disconnected from its ultimate outcome that they disengage from the educational process either by physically dropping out or by mentally dropping out, the more invisible problem. Students must be given opportunities to identify, and to select or reconsider, their interests, goals, and career majors, including those options that are not necessarily traditional for their gender, race, or ethnic group.

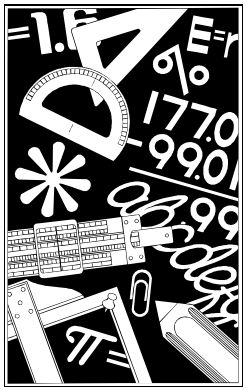


CAREER MAJOR / CAREER PATHWAYS

The school-based learning component also requires that students select a career major by at least the eleventh grade. For many students the lack of a specific goal or outcome in their educational program results in low motivation and achievement levels. The selection of a career major assists students in their preparation, by giving them a head start on some of the more advanced technical careers. By following articulated or laddered curricula, students have the benefit of receiving postsecondary credit while working at the secondary level, ultimately providing students not only with better career options but also with financial rewards because the amount of time it takes to complete the program is reduced.

Key Elements of School-Based Learning

- Career Counseling
- Selection of a Career Major/Pathway
- Integration of Academic & Vocational Education
- Evaluation
- Secondary / Postsecondary Articulation



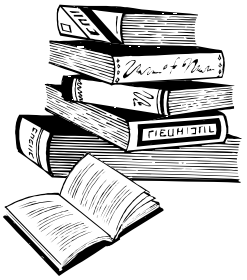
PROGRAM OF STUDY

The program of study in a School-to-Careers program must meet the state's established academic content standards, including, where applicable, those developed pursuant to the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. It also must meet the requirements necessary to prepare a student for postsecondary education opportunities and those necessary for a student to earn a skill certificate.

Skill Certificate

The development of a portable, industry-recognized credential has gained significant attention over the past several years. The skill certificate certifies that a student has mastered skills at levels that are at least as challenging as the skill standards endorsed by the National Skill Standards Board established under the National Skill Standards Act of 1994. The National Skill Standards Board has existed for over two years, and it has sponsored the development of national skill standards in a number of occupational areas. The skill standards and subsequent skill certificates created by the National Skill Standards Board are to serve the following purposes:

- act as the cornerstone for a national strategy to enhance workforce skills;
- result in increased productivity, economic growth, and American economic competitiveness;
- ensure the development of a highly skilled, high quality, and high performance workforce with the most skilled frontline workers in the world;
- inform training providers and prospective employees of skills necessary for employment;
- enhance the employment security of workers by providing portable credentials and skills;
- assist workers in obtaining certification of their skills to protect against dislocation and allow them to pursue career advancements and to enhance their ability to re-enter the workforce;
- assist students and entry-level workers in determining the skill levels and competencies needed to compete for high-wage jobs;
- aid training providers and educators in determining appropriate training services to offer;
- assist the government in evaluating whether publicly funded training assists participants in meeting skill standards, where such standards exist, thereby protecting the integrity of public expenditures;
- facilitate the transition to high performance work organizations;
- increase opportunities for minorities and women in various ways, such as removing barriers to the entry of minorities and women into nontraditional employment; and
- facilitate linkages between other components of the national strategy to enhance workforce skills, including School-to-Careers transition, secondary and postsecondary vocational-technical education, and job training programs.



It is critical that the skill standards developed meet the requirements of broad clusters of related occupations and industries, rather than those of individual jobs or occupations, so that students or employees will have the flexibility to transition from one job to another.

INTEGRATION OF ACADEMIC & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The fourth requirement of the school-based learning component is to develop a program of instruction and curricula that integrates academic and vocational learning consisting of applied methodologies, interdisciplinary teaching and team teaching strategies. At the same

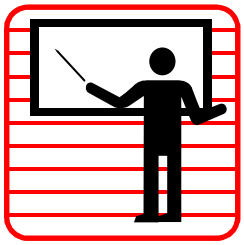
time, the integrated curricula should provide instruction in all aspects of an industry, related to the chosen career major of the participating students. This design will provide students with applied and contextual learning opportunities in both an academic and occupational environment made relevant through its connection to a career major and occupational outcomes.

The term "all aspects of an industry" is defined as: "All characteristics of the industry or industry sector the student is preparing to enter—including planning, management, finances, technical and production skills, and technology, labor, community, health and safety and environmental issues related to that industry."

In other words, the instruction that students receive in their chosen career major / career pathway should include not just the technical skills related to that industry, but also an understanding of the broader issues involved. The emphasis on certain issues should vary with the nature of the industry. For example, the construction industry would be particularly concerned with labor and safety issues, while community issues might predominate in the retail industry.

Such a program will provide students with applied and contextual learning opportunities in both an academic and an occupational environment and in a manner that has direct relevance to a career major / career pathway and occupational outcomes.

EVALUATION



The fifth required activity under the school-based learning component is the provision of regularly scheduled evaluations. The purpose of these evaluations is to assess student progress in the following areas:

- Academic strengths and weaknesses;
- Academic progress;
- Workplace knowledge;
- Career goals;
- Additional learning opportunities needed to master core academic and vocational skills.

SECONDARY / POSTSECONDARY ARTICULATION

The sixth requirement under the school-based learning component is that partnerships must design mechanisms to provide students participating in School-to-Careers programs with opportunities to participate in additional training or postsecondary education programs. Provisions must also be developed that facilitate the transfer of students between education and training programs.

SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS TOOLS

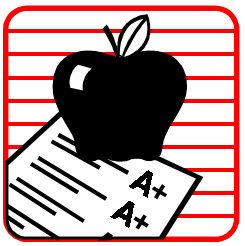
The remaining pages of this section contain some tools to assist you in assessing your current system, ultimately allowing you to determine the areas in greatest need of improvement. By combining the tools from all sections of this manual you will be able to develop a good foundation for the creation of your local School-to-Careers plan.

SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS TOOL #1:

The first tool is designed to help you assess your current system. It will allow you to document the pieces you already have in place and also to identify which parts of a School-to-Careers system need to be designed or developed prior to implementation.

SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS TOOL #2:

The second tool is designed to help you assess only the school-based components of a School-to-Careers system. This tool will help you to determine your strengths and weaknesses. After it is completed, working committees generally are established to address the areas that need further design and development.



1—Not Yet Considered 2—Planning 3—Early Implementation 4—Functional 5—Institutionalized

Systems are Governed by Broad Coalitions of Community Partners:

1) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Governing partnership includes decisionmakers from schools (K-12 and postsecondary), employers, employer associations, local government, community-based organizations, employee organizations and unions, parents, and students.

The Governing Partnership has Agreed to and Clearly Communicated:

2) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... System mission;
3) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... System goals and priorities;
4) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Roles and responsibilities of partners;
5) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Fiscal responsibilities, administrative duties, decisionmaking authority;
6) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Review, assessment, and evaluation responsibilities.

The System is Understood and Supported by:

7) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... School board and superintendent;
8) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Postsecondary governing boards;
9) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Local government;
10) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... State board of education;
11) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Appropriate state workforce and economic development directors;
12) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Program coordinators are in place to assist employers and school personnel;
13) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... System is consistent with local and stateSchool-to-Careers system and plans;

14) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... System regularly collects, analyzes, and publicizes evaluation information on student outcomes pertinent to labor market and educational measures, student satisfaction, and employer and program cost benefits.

Employers Provide Structured Worksite Learning and Paid Work Experience:

15) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Employer placements are available for all participating students.
16) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Worker organizations support the concept of placement of students at the worksite.
17) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Worksite placement criteria are understood by everyone involved.
18) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Structure and duration of student work placement is

1—Not Yet Considered	2—Planning	3—Early Implementation	4—Functional	5—Institutionalized

established.

19) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Responsibility for liability, insurance, and workers' compensation for students is established.

20) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Highly skilled workers are assigned to teach student workers.

21) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Mentors are provided for each student and can describe and support student career path choices and workplace activities.

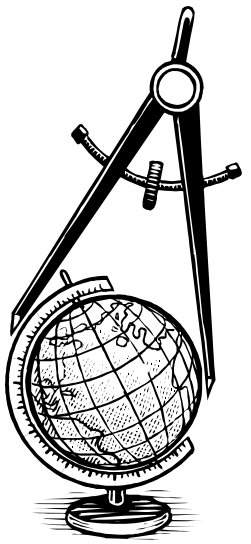
22) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Specialized training is provided to prepare work supervisors and mentors to work with students.

23) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Students are engaged in real, productive work.

24) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Rate of pay is standardized.

25) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Advancement at the worksite is based on student knowledge, skill level, and performance.

26) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Program coordinators are in place to assist employers and school personnel.



Schools Integrate Academic and Vocational Learning:

27) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Interdisciplinary teams develop specific learning objectives, courses, and lesson plans.

28) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Collaborative planning time is provided for interdisciplinary teams.

29) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Project-based learning opportunities, integrating technical and academic learning, are provided for students.

30) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Academic courses utilize and reinforce academic competencies.

31) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Technical/vocational courses utilize and reinforce academic competencies.

32) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Academic and technical courses reflect employers' expectations of what students should know and be able to do.

33) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Assessments of student performance reflect academic and vocational/technical integration.

School and Workplace are Coordinated and Integrated:

34) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Employers and school personnel jointly design learning outcomes.

35) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Employers and school personnel participate in curriculum development and approval.

36) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Employers and school personnel decide which partner will have primary responsibility for instruction and reinforcement of particular skills.

37) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... School counselors and teachers can describe and support student career path choices.

1—Not Yet Considered	2—Planning	3—Early Implementation	4—Functional	5—Institutionalized

38) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Staff development efforts enhance necessary skills and appropriate attitudes for teachers, counselors, workplace instructors, mentors, and supervisors.

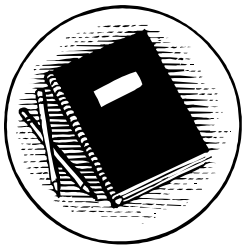
39) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Employers and school personnel jointly design and implement an orientation program to prepare students for worksite expectations.

40) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Students develop learning and training plans with teachers and workplace instructors based on an established sequence and pace of technical training.

41) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... School-based coursework explicitly incorporates student reflections on work experiences.

42) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Integration of the school and workplace begins with the early grades.

43) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Work-based activity explicitly reinforces academic and technical lessons.



44) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Employers and school personnel have the means and responsibility to assess, validate, and report on the successful acquisition of skills by students.

Programs Connect High School and Postsecondary Learning:

45) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Programs will engage students for a minimum of two years and bridge at least the 12th and 13th grades.

46) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Programs define "postsecondary" to include a broad range of options, including community colleges, technical institutions, four-year colleges, the military, proprietary schools, and registered apprenticeship programs.

47) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Postsecondary credit or advance standing can be earned while in high school.

48) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Advanced placement in postsecondary programs is guaranteed upon successful completion of the program's high school component.

49) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... High school training component is sufficiently flexible to allow movement between different career pathways.

50) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Leaving the program early does not jeopardize a student's high school graduation or diploma.

Completing Students Receive Widely Recognized Certification of Both Academic and Workplace Skill Mastery:

51) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Academic courses and technical training are accepted by local and regional postsecondary programs.

52) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... School personnel, postsecondary personnel, and employers support the development of meaningful credentials.

1—Not Yet Considered	2—Planning	3—Early Implementation	4—Functional	5—Institutionalized

53) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Skill certifications are accepted by local and regional employers.

54) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Certifications are developed within state or national skill standards.

55) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Students understand the requirements and meaning of the credentials.

56) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Skills certifications are developed by industry employers working in partnership with schools.

Career Guidance Connects K—16:

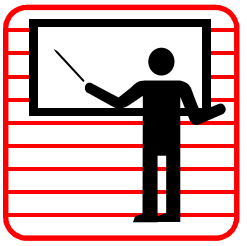
57) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... A career development curriculum is developed for high school.

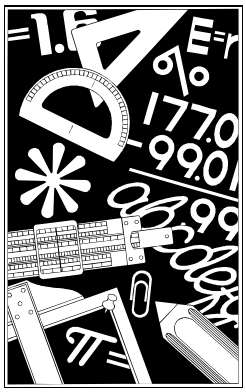
58) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... A career development curriculum is developed connecting middle school with high school.

59) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Career development activities to get students thinking about careers and working are at every grade level, K—12.

60) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... A career development curriculum is developed that connects high school with postsecondary programs.

61) 1 2 3 4 5 ..... Students are exposed to a wide variety of career paths and options at all grade levels.





SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS TEMPLATE

SCHOOL-BASED COMPONENTS	STAGE OF SYSTEM BUILDING			
	Vision	Planning	Early Implementation	Maintaining The System
Restructure schools around career majors and career pathways, including all aspects of the industry.				
Restructure school schedules				
Establish career paths—K-16 system				
Change culture of schools around STC				
Align current ongoing programs with STC system				
Gain and maintain support and participation of :				
Students				
Teachers				
Parents				
School Boards				
Business/Industry Rep.				
Counselors				
School & District Admin.				
Community-based Orgs.				
Establish rigorous academic content and performance standards				
Develop and integrate curricula				
Engage employers to assist schools with curriculum restructuring and all other STC activities				
Link school activities with activities in the workplace—e.g., joint curriculum development, personnel, roles, and connections between teachers and worksite supervisors.				

SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS TEMPLATE

SCHOOL-BASED COMPONENTS	STAGE OF SYSTEM BUILDING			
	Vision	Planning	Early Implementation	Maintaining The System
Develop site-based collaboration for STC activities				
Build in collaboration time for teachers				
Provide professional development				
Offer teacher internships at worksites				
Reform postsecondary teacher education system				
Implement innovative teaching methodologies				
Use applied learning methodologies				
Use authentic assessment				
Offer comprehensive career counseling				
Develop individual education and career development plans				
Provide generic job-related skills (e.g., interviewing, job search, and resume development)				
Serve all students and provide equal access to all program components for:				
Out-of-school youth				
Low-income youth				
Low achieving youth				
Limited English speakers				
Youth with disabilities				
Academically talented youth				
Youth in rural areas				
Non-traditional employment for young women